

May 18, 2004

Daniel Habuki, Ph.D.  
President, Soka University of America  
1 University Drive  
Aliso Viejo, California 92656

Mr. Joseph T. Edmiston, FAICP  
Executive Director, Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy  
5750 Ramirez Canyon Road  
Malibu, California 90265

Dear Dr. Habuki and Mr. Edmiston:

In 1997 a compromise was reached between Los Angeles County, Soka University and the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy that resulted in the approval of a limited expansion of the Soka University campus in Calabasas. In addition to the very limited nature of the university's expansion, the agreement provided for a number of conservation easements that would have protected the property surrounding the campus.

As you know, this compromise agreement was overturned by court action. Since the appellate court ruling against Los Angeles County's approval of the plan, I have discussed the future disposition of Soka University's property and related matters with several of the interested parties. Based on these conversations, I am now convinced that a new approach is timely and appropriate.

I am asking both of you to actively consider the possibility of a sale of the Soka University (Calabasas) property to the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy. The Soka property is the most important unprotected property in the Santa Monica Mountains, located at the geographic and natural resources center of the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area. Every plan of every natural resource agency has identified this site as being critical to the future of this mountain range.

A window of opportunity may now exist for a successful sale of this property, assuming that Soka University is a willing seller and the Conservancy is a willing and able buyer. In order to succeed, such a sale must be consummated quickly and must involve the active participation of relevant State agencies and legislative leaders. At this time, I believe the conditions may be right for an agreement that could satisfy the needs of Soka University of America, State parks agencies, Los Angeles County and the region as a whole.

You are both valued constituents of this office. You have both demonstrated a respect for the environment of our area. And, you have both been good stewards of the properties under your jurisdiction. If we are ever to consider an amicable agreement to permanently preserve this precious property in public ownership, now is the time to act. I urge you both to address this issue with the urgency that it deserves. I offer my personal services and those of my office to assist in any way necessary.

Thank you for your attention to my request and for your efforts on behalf of the Santa Monica Mountains.

Sincerely,

ZEV YAROSLAVSKY  
Supervisor, Third District